

**Board of Veterans Services  
Meeting Minutes  
August 22, 2019**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on Thursday, August 22, 2019 at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia, 10300 Pridesville Rd., Amelia Courthouse, VA. Members participating by remote location were at: 701 Kenmore Ave., Fredericksburg, VA 22401; and

**Members Present**

- Victor Angry
- Carl Bedell
- Paige Cherry
- Michael Dick
- Gordon Helsel
- James Icenhour
- Thurraya Kent
- Lyla Kohistany
- Tammi Lambert
- John Lesinski
- Jason Miyares
- Kathy Owens
- David Sitler, representing Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
- Steven Combs, Acting Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

**Members Present by Phone (Remote Location)**

- Kathleen Murphy
- Bryce Reeves

**Members Absent**

- Carl Bess
- John Cosgrove
- Susan Hippen
- Frank Reyes
- Julie Waters
- Frank Finelli, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation
- Frank Wickersham, Chairman, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

**Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present**

- Carrie Ann Alford, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Dan Kemano, DVS
- Thomas Herthel, Deputy Commissioner, DVS
- Robyn Jennings, DVS

- Jim Darragh, DVS
- Todd Barnes, DVS
- Heather Legere, DVS

### **Guests Present**

- Frank Rennie, Chairman, Virginia War Memorial Foundation Board

### **Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet**

- Agenda
- Proposed dates for 2020 meetings
- Updated Membership Matrix
- FY19 DVS Statistics
- Minutes from the May 2 meeting (Agenda Item VI)
- Reports (Agenda Item VII)
  - Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
  - Veterans Services Foundation
- Update on DVS and new organizational structure from Acting Commissioner Combs (VIII)
- Updated POC list (X.a)
- Proposed Amendment to Bylaws (Agenda Item X.b)
- Proposed letter from BVS to Governor Northam (X.c)
- Reports from the work groups (X.d)
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair (Agenda Item X.e)

### **Call to Order**

Without a quorum present, Chairman Jim Icenhour, welcomed the BVS members and informed the board that two members were en route, but without a quorum they would take up the agenda items out of order and deal with housekeeping items and the Care Centers presentation first.

Chairman Icenhour called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked the members to go around and introduce themselves to new member Ms. Thurraya Kent. Then the DVS staff introduced themselves to the board. There were no other guests or members of the public in attendance.

Mr. Dan Kemano, Director of Virginia Veterans Cemeteries greeted the board, welcoming everyone to Amelia cemetery and went through the packet of information about the cemeteries that had been distributed to each member. He encouraged everyone to show veterans the envelope in the folder which has all the important information about applying to the cemetery and he can get them more envelopes for distribution upon request. He said he was looking forward to giving tours at the conclusion of the meeting.

### **Housekeeping Items**

Chairman Icenhour thanked Mr. Kemano for hosting the board and for the information. He directed everyone's attention to the list of potential meeting dates for 2020 and said they will be approved at the November meeting. He pointed out the JLC day at the General Assembly on the

list and asked Ms. Carrie Ann Alford to add a few words. She said that it was a good day to come and meet with legislators, as they consider it “veterans day” but any BVS members who want to attend, need to let her know as they will be advocating for the agency’s priorities that day and meeting with pre-selected legislators. They will not be advocating for the JLC priorities. Mr. John Lesinski stated that he attended last year and it was a great day and very productive and in the afternoon was able to go with the JLC members to meet with the Speaker and Lt. Governor and have a great discussion on issues.

Ms. Alford also pointed out the new membership matrix in everyone’s packet and asked that they let her know of any updated phone numbers or other information. She also pointed out that everyone had a hard copy of the FY19 agency stats sheet that was sent out via email earlier in the week.

### **PRESENTATION**

Chairman Icenhour asked Acting Commissioner Combs and the Veterans Care Center directors to proceed with their presentation.

Acting Commissioner Combs started with a history and an overview of Veterans Care Centers and how they are in-patient, residential care facilities designed specifically for veterans, that offers a mixture of skilled nursing, assisted living, Alzheimer’s/memory, and short-term rehabilitation in a home-like environment. Both Care Centers in Virginia are industry leaders in quality of care. He also reviewed the FY18 statistics for both Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) and Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) and the veteran retiree population in Virginia.

Next, Ms. Robyn Jennings, Administrator of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) gave an overview of her facility, along with Mr. Jim Darragh, Deputy Administrator, and an update on revenue, costs and the five year plan.

Mr. Lesinski asked about funding and the Veteran Services Fund assistance since the General Assembly does not support with appropriations. Mr. Combs stated that VSF covers a small amount of operating costs but revenue sources have to balance costs and reserves for capital costs. The VA needs a project to be about \$1M before they will consider it for grants, so items like the whole facility generator qualify. Ms. Alford added that other states have large obligations for their care centers and envy Virginia’s system – they would like to move to a revenue neutral model but can’t do it for political reasons. The fact that the General Assembly does not support the care centers is not necessarily a bad thing.

Mr. Carl Bedell asked if they can bring in federal energy assistance programs to improve energy efficiencies and almost no cost and would lead to additional grants. Jim Darragh said that SBVCC is working with the Virginia Department of General Services (DGS) on energy efficiencies and that may lead to some federal grants. Heather Legere added that VVCC already receives some rebates for energy efficiencies.

Mr. Combs added that the two care centers do compete against other facilities and have marketing teams to do outreach to veterans.

Ms. Kent asked about contracting for the wander management initiatives, specifically, given that current wander management technology integrates with established telephone/IT lines. She wanted to know if the VCCs would be able to leverage commercial off-the-shelf cost savings due to technological advances. Mr. Combs responded that as a state facility, the VCCs use the state-approved IT infrastructure and are unable to contract for anything different.

Mr. Mike Dick asked what “private pay” includes. Ms. Jennings stated that private pay is resident’s own money and can also be long-term insurance or private insurance or multiple sources of payment.

Mr. Combs added that the care centers use a triangle of admissions – do you have a need for the care we provide? Do we have the care you need? And the financial considerations – and the finance staff will sit down with every eligible veteran to figure out payer sources.

Mr. Lesinski asked if they get “whipsawed” by multiple payer sources and not getting reimbursed in a timely manner? Ms. Jennings said it can fluctuate, but once a resident is on Medicaid it is fairly steady.

Next, Mr. Todd Barnes, Administrator of the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) gave an overview of his facility, along with Ms. Heather Legere, Deputy Administrator, and an update on revenue, costs and the five year plan.

Mr. Barnes highlighted the issue of the new VA regulations that domiciliary residents must work part-time and get paid (not volunteer work), in order for the facility to get reimbursed by the VA. Work is a vague term that the VA has not really defined and could be chores like keeping one’s room clean, but it must be in the care plan and the resident must be paid. The residency rates have been going down in the domiciliary wing for years and DVS is looking at converting those semi-private rooms to private rooms for short-term rehabilitation residents. There are currently 30 open rooms that could be converted into 15 private rooms.

Mr. Combs added that the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH) and National Association of State Departments of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) are working to change the regulations regarding work requirements.

Chairman Icenhour asked what the process is to change the domiciliary rooms to private rooms for short-term rehabilitation residents? Mr. Barnes said the process has already started with DVS working with the Virginia Department of Health and he believes VVCC can transform the rooms quickly once the plan is approved.

Mr. Paige Cherry asked about gender and racial stats of the residents [branch of service and era of service were in the presentation]. Mr. Barnes said yes, the facility is very diverse on race. They currently only have about seven women residents but expect that to go up with time. Ms. Jennings added that there are 10 women residents at SBVCC and it is also racially diverse.

Mr. Combs then gave an update on the two new care centers – Puller VCC and Jones and Cabacoy VCC. He said that DVS is waiting on the VA to release the funds so the money is

available to start building. DVS anticipates that will happen soon with an anticipated open date of summer or early fall 2021. The administrators will be hired 8-12 months prior to opening and then the Director of Nursing, HR Director, IT, marketing and admissions staff and others – so that there will be about 60 staff on board before the first resident is admitted. The buildings will be filled in “waves” with staffing commensurate with Household 1 filling up, then the second and so on. DVS anticipates it will take 18-20 months to reach full occupancy. DVS anticipates full revenue stream for a revenue positive point to be approximately 2-3 months after full occupancy. This will mean that the General Assembly provide support to the new care centers until they break even.

Chairman Icenhour asked if this is funding that will be needed for the next biennium? Mr. Combs said yes – based on a summer 2021 open, which is Fiscal Year 2022, hiring will start in Fiscal Year 2021, which is the next biennium budget. There is a letter in the packet for the board to review later in the meeting.

Mr. Lesinski asked when will DVS start taking applications for the new care centers? Mr. Combs said that will be roughly January 2021, but the agency is already keeping a list of people who have requested applications or more information or expressed interest in living in the new care centers. They will be sent applications and information to apply as soon as the process opens. Mr. Combs thanked the Chairman and the board for the opportunity to give a presentation. A copy of the powerpoint presentation was distributed to the members after the meeting and is available upon request.

At 11:05, with the two additional members now present, Chairman Icenhour asked Ms. Carrie Ann Alford to call the roll. The roll was called and a quorum was determined with 12 members present, and with two members at remote locations, there were 14 members in attendance. One additional member arrived after the roll was called, for a total of 15 members present.

#### **Approval of Agenda and May 2, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Jim Icenhour asked for a motion to approve the agenda (*Attachment 1*) and May 2, 2019 meeting minutes. John Lesinski made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Michael Dick, to approve the agenda and minutes. The motion carried **unanimously**.

#### **Reports**

In the absence of Frank Wickersham, III the **Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)** Chairman, David Sitler, JLC Legislative Chair, gave a short report on the JLC, their July 24 meeting and progress with their policy priorities for 2020. Mr. Sitler stated that the next JLC meeting is October 16 at the American Legion, in Richmond. (*Attachment 2*)

In the absence of Frank Finelli, the **Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)** Chairman, Mr. John Lesinski, who also serves on the VSF, gave a short report on the VSF and their most recent meeting, and stated that Mr. Finelli was absent due to an event that morning with the Governor in Richmond to receive a donation from Smithfield Foods for \$150,000 to aid veteran homelessness programs. (*Attachment 3*).

**Department of Veterans Services (DVS)** Acting Commissioner Steve Combs thanked everyone

for their support of DVS and its programs and services and for working closely with him and DVS to support Virginia veterans. He gave a brief update on John Newby who has moved on to VirginiaBio. He explained that as of June 10, DVS had reorganized its' operations, and that now there are two Deputy Commissioners – Tom Herthel and Annie Walker. He discussed the opening of the new Benefits offices in Oceana and Fort Belvoir, noting that the Oceana office is open and the Fort Belvoir office will hopefully be open by September. He also updated the BVS members on the progress of the construction project at the Virginia War Memorial, and while it will not be ready for a grand opening on Patriot's Day, there will still be the upcoming Patriot Day Ceremony on September 11 at the Memorial and they are all invited to attend. Due to time constraints, he ended by noting the passing of Mr. Kenneth Wright, World War II Veteran and philanthropist, whose foundation pledged \$5M to the Virginia War Memorial Foundation to support both the current construction project and the Virginia War Memorial's education programs and exhibits. (*Attachment 4*).

### **New Business**

#### **Updated POC List**

Ms. Alford stated there was a new list in the packet with updated assignments to better reflect the new organizational structure at DVS and based on comments from the directors. She pointed out that most members will see their name twice on the matrix, except for a few who have a big responsibility, and she reminded them that the POC system was created to build stronger relationships between the board members and DVS service line directors and they will be shifted around throughout their service on the board. If anyone has an objection to their assignment they can email Ms. Alford and petition for a new assignment, but all members should expect to work with all service line directors at some point if they serve for two full terms and to please take on the challenge of the current assignment and dig in to learning about the service line assigned. The only exception is the legislative members who do not rotate and work with Ms. Alford. She also stated that due to Mr. Dick becoming chairman a new alternate to the JLC needs to be appointed. If no one volunteers, someone will be assigned by the new Chair. (*Attachment 5*).

#### **Draft 2020 Bylaws**

Chairman Icenhour asked everyone to review the draft 2020 bylaws updated with the Code changes that will go into effect on January 1. Ms. Alford added that there has been another encouragement from the FOIA council to add into the bylaws under attendance specifying which one of the three meetings each year is to be a non-electronic meeting with no one calling in. That and other recommended edits to the bylaws should be sent to the new Chair and copy her, by October 1 (*Attachment 6*).

#### **Proposed Letter to Governor Northam from the BVS**

Chairman Icenhour asked everyone to review the draft letter to Governor Northam from the BVS regarding fully funding the veterans care centers in the introduced budget. (*Attachment 7*). Chairman Icenhour made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Victor Angry, to approve the draft letter and send to the Governor. The motion carried **unanimously**.

#### **Reports from the Working Groups**

Mr. Michael Dick gave an update from the Education Working Group, highlighting from their submitted report in the packet that the questionnaires for the school administrations and students

have been finalized. The group anticipates gearing up soon and reporting back in November on actions taken. Mr. Dick is working with the schools to set up on-campus visits with the tentative timeframe listed in the report. The questions for the schools and the students were also included in the report. (*Attachment 8*).

Mr. Carl Bedell gave an update from the Benefits Working Group and the result of interviews with staff is the issue of staff salaries has risen to top level risk for the continued success of DVS. The working group has submitted FOIA requests for state employee data and will analyze the data to determine the severity of any salary disparity. Ms. Alford apologized for not receiving the report and including it in the packet and the report was distributed to the board members after the meeting. (*Attachment 9*).

In the absence of chair Ms. Julie Waters, Vic Angry gave the report of the Veterans in the Arts Working Group. He reported that Ms. Waters and Ms. Alford met with DGS and discussed several opportunities for partnership – with DGS discussing an RFP for agencies to buy new artwork for their buildings from Virginia veteran artists, and offered space during a food truck Wednesday or farmers’ market Friday to BVS to highlight veteran artists and have them sell their artwork.

Ms. Alford added that she had just received an email from Ms. Jennifer Boyd, Policy Analyst at DGS with a further update. She read the email to the board:

“Good morning! I wanted to follow up with you regarding our meeting about Veteran's Art on August 12th. I spoke with Killeen King the On the Square coordinator and copied on this email, about what Department of Veterans Services would like to do to promote Veteran Artists. There are a couple of options for you. The first option would be as we discussed in the meeting to set up a tent and display their work at the Food Trucks (Wednesday) and/or Farmer's Market (Friday). They would be allowed to display their art and hand out their cards to anyone interested in purchasing their work. The second option would be to have an On the Square event exclusive to the Veteran's Art projects and choose a day where they could set up on the gravel lot and the On the Square Team would promote the event. I am connecting you with Killeen and you can work with her on the coordination and logistics...”

Ms. Alford asked for assistance in finding veterans who are artists and would want to participate and also attend the events and staff the tent. (*Attachment 10*).

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Chairman Jim Icenhour read the bylaws rules regarding election and stated that the candidate for Chairman is Michael Dick. Chairman Icenhour asked for a voice vote for Chair. Michael Dick was elected unanimously.

Chairman Icenhour stated that there were two candidates for vice chair, Mr. Carl Bess and Ms. Tammi Lambert. Nominees had been announced to the board via email ahead of the meeting in accordance with the bylaws. Mr. Bess was unable to attend the meeting due to a new job and had asked Mr. Icenhour to read a statement sent via email. Mr. Icenhour read the short statement and then Ms. Lambert gave a short statement as to why she wished to be vice chair. Ms. Lambert

stepped out of the room and the chair called for a show of hands for each candidate.

Mr. Carl Bess received 2 votes and Ms. Tammi Lambert received 11 votes. Acting Commissioner Combs abstained from voting. Delegate Murphy had left the meeting early due to another meeting and did not vote.

Ms. Alford asked Ms. Lambert to return to the room and a round of applause was given by the members. (*Attachment 11*).

### **“Good of the Order” Reports**

Mr. Paige Cherry asked about where he could give vouchers for homeless veterans. Ms. Alford told him to speak with DC Herthel after the meeting as he oversees VVFS and will put him in touch with Mr. Matt Leslie who oversees the homelessness program for DVS.

Mr. Lesinski stated that his Board of Supervisors (Rappahannock County) received a letter from the War Memorial Foundation asking for a \$1 donation for every person from the county on the Shrine of Memory and he said while they hadn't acted on it yet he thought that was a great idea. Mr. Frank Rennie, Chairman of the War Memorial Foundation Board said that they had sent letters like that to every locality with names on the Shrine asking for a \$1 donation for every person from that locality listed and they had a 100% success rate with localities agreeing to make the donations.

There were no further Good of the Order reports from board members.

### **Public Comment**

There were no individuals seeking to make public comment.

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Icenhour reminded the members that the next meeting will be held November 14 at the Virginia War Memorial and there would be a tour of the new expansion for the members. He handed the gavel over to Chairman Dick.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m. Mr. Kemano divided up the board members who could stay into two groups of six for tours of the cemetery grounds.



## ATTACHMENT 1

### **BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES**

**DVS Veterans Cemetery at Amelia**  
**10300 Pridesville Rd., Amelia Courthouse, VA 23002**

**Remote Location:**

701 Kenmore Ave., Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**Remote Location:**

3801 Nebraska Ave NW, Washington, DC 20016

**Call In:** 1-319-493-7836 / PIN: 459914#

**August 22, 2019**

**10:00 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.**

### **DRAFT AGENDA**

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman* (10:00-10:02)
- II. Roll Call and Quorum Determination – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman*, (10:02-10:05)
- III. Introduction of new board members – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman* (10:05-10:10)
- IV. Introduction of DVS staff and guests – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman* (10:10-10:12)
- V. Welcome to Amelia, *Dan Kemano, Cemeteries Director* (10:12-10:17)
- VI. Approval of Agenda; May 2 Meeting Minutes – *Jim Icenhour, BVS Chairman* (10:17-10:20)
- VII. Reports (10:20 – 10:30)
  - a. Joint Leadership Council – *Frank Wickersham, JLC Chairman*
  - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *John Lesinski, VSF member, on behalf of Chair*
- VIII. Update on DVS and new organizational structure, construction projects & new offices, *Steven Combs, Acting Commissioner* (10:30-11:05)
- IX. Presentation on Care Centers – *Robyn Jennings, SBVCC Administrator and Todd Barnes, VVCC Administrator* (11:05-11:35)
- X. New Business: (11:35-12:05)
  - a. Updated POC list, *Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Policy Director*
  - b. Distribution of Draft 2020 Bylaws, *Jim Icenhour, Chairman*
  - c. Proposed Letter to the Governor from BVS, *Jim Icenhour, Chairman*
  - d. Reports from Working Groups – *Michael Dick, Carl Bedell, Julie Waters*
  - e. Election of Chair and Vice Chair, *Jim Icenhour, Chairman*
  - f. “Good of the Order” Reports – *All Members*
- XI. Public comment (12:05 – 12:10)
- XII. Wrap Up, Next Meeting Announcement & Adjourn – *Jim Icenhour, Chairman* (12:10-12:15)
- XIII. Lunch provided & tour of the cemetery (12:15-1:15)

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

### **JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES August 22, 2019**

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) met on July 24, at the American Legion in Richmond.

We received updates on the DVS education service line, which includes the GI Bill, Training and Education Alliance and the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). We also received an informative update from Dr. Clay Mountcastle, Director of the Virginia War Memorial on all the educational programs and events they have been working on.

We discussed 2 letters to send to Governor Northam on issues of importance to the JLC, as well as 10 potential initiatives for 2020. All 10 were moved forward and the sponsors will continue to research, edit and polish leading up to our October meeting where the final list of initiatives is voted on and ranked.

At the meeting, I was voted in for a second term as Chairman and Mr. Bill Ashton of the Fleet Reserve Association was voted in as the Vice Chairman.

The Council provides advice and assistance to the Governor, General Assembly and the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) on matters of concern to the veterans community and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.

Our next meeting will be October 16 at 10 a.m. at the American Legion Headquarters building in Richmond.

Respectfully submitted,  
Frank G. Wickersham, III  
Chairman

**ATTACHMENT 3**  
**VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION REPORT**  
**Board of Veterans Services**  
**August 22, 2019**

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees has held one Board meeting since the last BVS meeting on May 2, 2019. The VSF met on June 13, 2019 at the State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia. The Development and Finance Committees also met on the same date and at the same location. The Procedures and Policies met on May 22 and August 6, 2019 in Richmond.

The Development Committee discussed the Foundation's revenue priorities for FY20 that includes the importance of strong collaboration with DVS to increase donations. The Foundation depends on the support of DVS to assist with identifying program priorities, provide leads for organizations and potential fundraising events, and to effectively integrate social media in its outreach and fundraising efforts. It was agreed that an aggressive push was needed to identify "third party" funds similar to the following programs in which the Foundation currently participates: Dominion Energy Charity Classic Birdies for Charity, Amazon Smile, Kroger Community Rewards and Corporate Matching Gift Programs.

The Finance Committee reviewed the May (FM11) financial report. Both the VVFS Direct Veterans Services and the VVFS Homeless Veterans Fund have high average yearly expenditures which need to be considered when making decisions for the upcoming budget. As of May 31, 2019, the VVFS Homeless Fund donations totaled \$185,050 with expenditures at \$204,201. The spending is still within the budget for FY19. DVS has been asked to submit their anticipated high/low budget requirements for FY21-FY22 and to present those budgets for approval at the September Board of Trustees meeting.

The Procedures and Policies Committee reviewed and recommended the DVS VSF Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the revised Bylaws be presented for approval before the Board at the June meeting. The Board accepted their recommendation and approved the MOU and Bylaws. Efforts to update the Foundation's policies continue.

The Foundation closed FY19 with over \$635,000 in donations and expenditures at \$620,000, just below the aggregate DVS budget of \$796,500 for FY19. The Foundation remains committed to increasing donations to sustain the rate of expense and looks forward to working with DVS as they present their anticipated needs for our Virginia Veterans and their families for the upcoming years. A strong collaboration between the Foundation and DVS will result in identifying and assisting additional Veterans and their families, who are in need.

For major donors, the Smithfield check presentation of \$150,000 benefitting the VVFS Homeless Veteran Fund will take place August 22, 2019 with Governor Northam and Secretary Hopkins participating in the ceremony. The 2019 Dominion Energy Charity Classic is scheduled for October 17-19 at the Country Club of Virginia in Richmond. A portion of those proceeds will benefit the V3 program.

The Foundation welcomed Jack Hilgers to the Board of Trustees. Elections for FY20 officers were held and the Board elected Frank Finelli as Chair, Jack Hilgers as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair and Al Pianalto as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair. Four retiring Trustees were also honored for their dedicated service throughout the years. These were Meade Spotts, Jim Boyd, Rich Schollmann and Tom Mulrine.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2019 at the America Legion Department HQ.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Frank Finelli  
Chairman  
Veterans Services Foundation

#### **ATTACHMENT 4**

**Memorandum for:** Chairman James O. Icenhour, Jr.  
Members, Board of Veterans Services

**From:** Steven J. Combs, Acting Commissioner

**Date:** August 22, 2019

**Subject:** Department of Veterans Services report

#### **Agency Leadership**

Commissioner John Newby's last day with the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) was Friday, August 2. He began his new job as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of [VirginiaBio](#) on Monday, August 5. My thanks to everyone who came out to say goodbye to Commissioner Newby on July 26 as we thanked and honored him for all that he did for DVS and Virginia's veterans and families. Please join me in wishing him success in his new leadership role! I know he intends to remain active in the veteran community, so you should expect to hear from him from time to time.

Governor Ralph Northam has appointed me Acting Commissioner of DVS, effective August 2. As Acting Commissioner, I will have all the duties and responsibilities as did Commissioner Newby. I will serve in this role until a new Commissioner is appointed by Governor Northam.

Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Jabs are leading the process to identify candidates for appointment by the Governor. Secretary Hopkins' office has put out this announcement:

The Commonwealth of Virginia seeks an exceptional Veteran leader to serve as the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). Full details regarding this position may be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/2OEQfKi>.

To Apply: This position will be filled as a Governor appointment serving at will for a designated term of five years. Veterans who are interested in being considered, please send a cover letter, resume and professional references to: [vada@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:vada@governor.virginia.gov). Questions may be directed to the office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs at: 804-225-4317. Screening for this position will begin Monday, August 26, 2019. The position will remain open until an appointment is made and announced by Governor Northam. Benefits offered to individuals in

appointed positions include the following: 30 days of paid time off each year; parental leave; health care insurance; flexible spending accounts; group life insurance; retirement benefits through the Virginia Retirement System. Compensation will be commensurate with experience.

As with Commissioner Newby and his predecessors, my door is always open.

#### **Agency Organizational Structure**

Commissioner John Newby put a new DVS organizational structure into effect on June 10, 2019. Prior to this date, almost all of the service line and staff directors reported directly to the Commissioner. During Commissioner Newby's tenure, DVS grew significantly in the number of

services and programs offered to Virginia's veterans and family members, but the Agency's leadership support infrastructure had not kept pace with that growth. In announcing the changes to the DVS team, Commissioner Newby noted that "[M]any state agencies half our size have a leadership infrastructure more robust than we currently have, incorporating both multiple deputy agency heads to oversee service lines, but also, in some cases, Chief Operating Officers, Chiefs of Staff, and Chief Administration Officers."

Working within existing DVS HQ budget space, Commissioner Newby put in place a new DVS organizational structure, effective June 10, 2019, in order to continue to provide superior service to Virginia Veterans and families.

The attached chart depicts the new DVS organizational structure that went into effect on June 10, 2019, and shows DVS leadership as of August 2, 2019.

Designed to enhance the ability of DVS to continue to deliver top-quality programs and services to Virginia's veterans and families, the new structure has three deputy commissioners (previously there was just one) leading seven service directorates (up from six). This new structure will not only help DVS today, but will also help DVS prepare to meet the evolving needs of Veterans and their families.

The following is a summary of DVS organizational and leadership changes effective June 10:

- The Veterans Education, Transition, and Employment (VETE) directorate was divided into two service directorates, both reporting to **Annie Walker**, who was promoted to Deputy Commissioner. An Army veteran, Walker has been with DVS for 15 years and had previously served as Director of the combined VETE directorate. Education, Transition, and Employment services are high-demand areas for DVS, and the move will better position DVS to serve veterans and family members. Deputy Commissioner Walker will also lead DVS programs for women veterans and entrepreneurship. Two newly-promoted directors serve under her:
  - **Martina Murray**, an 11-year DVS employee, was promoted to Director of Education Programs. Two major programs align under Director Murray: GI Bill program certification (also known as the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training – or SAA) and the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP); and
  - **Charlie Palumbo** was promoted to Director of Transition and Employment Programs. She has been with DVS three years and is a Navy veteran. Director Palumbo oversees VTAP, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program, and the Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) program. Prior to joining DVS, she worked for three years with the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC).
- **Thomas Herthel** was selected as Deputy Commissioner with oversight of the agency's Benefits Services division, the Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) program, and the three state veterans cemeteries. Herthel served in the Navy, the Army, and the

Air Force, and has been with DVS for five years. He previously served as Director of Benefits:

- **Donna Williams** was selected to be the Director of Benefits. An Air Force veteran, Williams joined DVS four-and-a-half years ago and was most recently Deputy Director of Benefits, having previously been the Benefits Eastern Region Director. Prior to joining DVS, she worked for four years with VEC.
- The DVS Communications Team will now align under **Lee Tinsley**, DVS CAO/CIO (Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Information Officer). Tinsley also leads DVS efforts centered around Information Technology (IT) and DR/COOP (Disaster Recovery/Continuity of Operations Planning).
  - **Brian Pickral**, DVS IT Lead Supervisor, will be picking up additional responsibilities on the IT team.
- The veterans care centers in Richmond and Roanoke, plus the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, will align under Chief Deputy Commissioner **Steven Combs**. An Air Force veteran, he joined DVS in 2004. He is also responsible for the construction and opening of the new veterans care centers in Fauquier County and Virginia Beach, as well as leadership and oversight of broader agency operations.

### **Construction Projects**

The Department of Veterans Services has four major construction projects and three smaller-scale construction/renovation projects underway, and is planning for one additional large-scale project.

1. Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk
  - a. Project Summary: installation of 7,000+ pre-placed outer burial containers (crypts), extending in-ground full-casketed burial capacity by approximately 8-10 years; expansion of the cemetery administrative building, adding much needed work and storage space; installation of new emergency generator; replacement of the main cemetery entrance sign; and construction of new decorative fence along Milner's Road;
  - b. Target completion date: October 2019;
  - c. Comments: material and manpower shortages have delayed construction by about three months.
2. Virginia War Memorial, Richmond
  - a. Project Summary: construction (expansion) of Shrine of Memory to honor Virginians killed in action during the wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; new exhibit and education space, including Medal of Honor Gallery and distance learning center; and new underground parking garage;
  - b. Target completion date: late November 2019;
  - c. Comments: construction delays related to materials and manpower led to cancellation of planned September 11 grand re-opening ceremony.

3. Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center, Virginia Beach
  - a. Project Summary: construction of new 128-bed veterans care center, which will offer long-term skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative care in an in-patient facility. All-private rooms organized into eight 16-bed "households" with shared dining/living space;
  - b. Target completion date: Summer/Fall 2021;
  - c. Comments: change in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) design requirements allowed DVS to rework design, adding more beds, but at a delay of approximately 12 months. All design documents submitted to USDVA for final grant approval, and are under review. Awaiting release of USDVA grant funds. USDVA reviewing multiple state projects and will release funding for all projects at once. Expected release of funds earmarked in FFY18 and FFY19 USDVA budgets imminent.
4. Puller Veterans Care Center, Vint Hill (Fauquier County)
  - a. Project Summary: construction of new 128-bed veterans care center, which will offer long-term skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/memory care, and short-term rehabilitative care in an in-patient facility. All-private rooms organized into eight 16-bed "households" with shared dining/living space;
  - b. Target completion date: Summer/Fall 2021;
  - c. Comments: change in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) design requirements allowed DVS to rework design, adding more beds, but at a delay of approximately 12 months. All design documents submitted to USDVA for final grant approval, and are under review. Awaiting release of USDVA grant funds. USDVA reviewing multiple state projects and will release funding for all projects at once. Expected release of funds earmarked in FFY18 and FFY19 USDVA budgets imminent.
5. Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, Richmond
  - a. Project Summary: replacement of emergency generator with new "whole house" generator sufficient to operate all systems in the event of commercial power failure/loss;
  - b. Target completion date: Spring 2020;
  - c. Comments: grant request submitted to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). Awaiting conditional grant approval by USDVA, which would put us on 180-day clock for submission of final design package and set aside federal share. Submission of all project documents and USDVA approval would then trigger final grant award and release of USDVA funding. USDVA reviewing multiple state projects. Expected conditional grant approval imminent.
6. Virginia Veterans Care Center, Roanoke
  - a. Project Summary: boiler system replacement;
  - b. Target completion date: September 2019;
  - c. Comments: part of ongoing capital improvement/replacement plans.

7. Virginia War Memorial, Richmond

- a. Project Summary: repairs to existing Shrine of Memory and Hargrove Plaza areas (primarily concrete repair);
- b. Target completion date: late November 2019;
- c. Comments: part of ongoing capital improvement/replacement plans. Concurrent with (but separate from) new construction project. Funded through state “maintenance reserve” pipeline.

8. Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Amelia

- a. Project Summary: application submitted to USDVA for \$4M grant to install 4,000+ pre-placed outer burial containers (crypts), extending in-ground full-casketed burial capacity by approximately 8-10 years;
- b. Target completion date: TBD (dependent on approval of USDVA grant application);
- c. Comments: USDVA update expected Fall 2019.

**New Offices**

- Oceana: the grand opening ceremony for the DVS Oceana (Virginia Beach) office was held August 8. The office is near NAS Oceana, and is open for operations.
- Fort Belvoir: the grand opening ceremony for the DVS Fort Belvoir office was held August 15. The office is on Fort Belvoir. The U.S. Army is putting the finishing touches on the building, and the office will begin operations in the near future – we will send you an announcement.

**DVS Highlights**

- The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program passed the 50,000 veterans hired mark.
- DVS thanks Smithfield Foods and the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) for the donation of \$150,000 to support DVS programs and services for homeless veterans.

**Upcoming DVS Events**

- Commonwealth’s Patriot Day Ceremony: September 11, 6 p.m., Virginia War Memorial;
- 2019 Virginia Veterans and Military Affairs Conference & V3 Awards Luncheon: September 26, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Greater Richmond Convention Center;
- Commonwealth’s Veterans Day Ceremony: November 11, 10:45 a.m., Virginia War Memorial;
- Wreath laying ceremonies at state and national veterans cemeteries: December 14, times vary by cemetery (many ceremonies part of national Wreaths Across America program);

**And on a Sad Note**

DVS mourns the passing of Mr. C. Kenneth Wright, World War II Veteran and philanthropist. In 2018, Mr. Wright’s foundation pledged \$5 million to the Virginia War Memorial Foundation to support both the current construction project and the Virginia War Memorial’s education programs and exhibits.



## ATTACHMENT 5



101 N. 14TH STREET, 17<sup>TH</sup> FL.  
RICHMOND, VA 23219

### COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

*James O. Icenhour, Jr.,  
Chairman*

*Michael Dick,  
Vice Chairman*

*Victor Angry*

*Carl Bedell*

*Carl Bess*

*Paige Cherry*

*Senator John Cosgrove*

*Delegate Gordon Helsel*

*Susan B. Hippen*

*Thuraya Kent*

*M. Lyla Kohistany*

*Tammi Lambert*

*John Lesinski*

*Delegate Jason Miyares*

*Delegate Kathleen  
Murphy*

*Kathy Owens*

*Senator Bryce Reeves*

*Efrain "Frank" Reyes*

*Julie Waters*

*Frank Wickersham, III  
Chairman, Joint  
Leadership Council of  
Veterans Service  
Organizations*

*Frank Finelli,  
Chairman, Veterans  
Services Foundation*

*John L. Newby II,  
Commissioner of  
Veterans Services*

#### POINTS OF CONTACT 2019-20

BVS MEMBER	POC FOR	SERVICE LINE & DIRECTOR	DEP COM
Mike Dick	Strategic Plan	Policy & Planning, Carrie Ann Alford	Commissioner
Mike Dick	Education	Education, Martina Murray	Annie Walker
John Lesinski	Care Centers – Puller; Jones & Cabacoy	Steve Combs, Chief DC	Steve Combs, CDC
Thuraya Kent	Care Centers – Sitter & Barfoot; Virginia VCC	Robyn Jennings (SBVCC); Todd Barnes (VVCC)	Steve Combs, CDC
Thuraya Kent, NOVA / Kathy Owens, HR	Employment & Entrepreneurship	Transition & Employment, Charlie Palumbo	Annie Walker
Victor Angry	Transition & Outreach Efforts (MMAC, VTAP & HireVetsNow)	Transition & Employment, Charlie Palumbo	Annie Walker
Lyla Kohistany	Women Veterans	Annie Walker; Beverly Van Tull, WVPM	Annie Walker
Carl Bedell	Benefits Services – Strategic Planning, Budget & Engagement	Benefits, Donna Williams	Tom Herthel
Susan Hippen	Benefits Services – Outreach & Support	Benefits, Donna Williams	Tom Herthel
Carl Bess & Kathy Owens	Virginia War Memorial	VWM, Clay Mountcastle	Steve Combs, CDC
Carl Bess	Behavioral Health & Rehabilitative Services	VVFS, Carol Berg	Tom Herthel
Paige Cherry	Justice-Involved Veterans & Veteran Treatment Dockets	VVFS, Carol Berg; Donna Harrison, Criminal Justice Director	Tom Herthel
Tammi Lambert	Homelessness & Housing Services; Peer Specialists	VVFS, Carol Berg; Matt Leslie, VVFS Asst. Dir.	Tom Herthel
Julie Waters	Veterans and the Arts – Therapeutic & Economic Dev.	VVFS, Carol Berg; Policy & Planning, Carrie Ann Alford	Tom Herthel; Commissioner
Frank Reyes	Cemeteries	Cemeteries, Dan Kemano	Tom Herthel
Frank Reyes	IT	Lee Tinsley	Steve Combs, CDC
Jim Icenhour	Communications & Marketing, Outreach	Communications, Tina Parlett-Calhoun	Lee Tinsley, CIO
Legislators	Legislative priorities, budget amendments & draft legislation	Carrie Ann Alford, Tammy Davidson & Steven Combs	Commissioner; Steve Combs, CDC

*Alternate to the JLC –*

*Alternate to the VSF – Paige Cherry*

## **ATTACHMENT 6**

# **BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES DRAFT BY-LAWS TO COMPLY WITH UPCOMING CODE CHANGES**

### **Article I – Authority and Statement of Purpose**

1. Authority: The authority for the Board of Veterans Services is found in § 2.2-2452 of the Code of Virginia (the Code).
2. Statement of Purpose: The Board of Veterans Services (the Board) is a policy board within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The Board is responsible for monitoring the welfare of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) and setting policies to enhance veteran services across the Commonwealth.

### **Article II – Membership**

1. Composition and Appointment of Members: The Board consists of 26 members, including seven legislative members, 15 nonlegislative citizen members and four *ex officio* members. Three members from the Senate are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. Four members from the House of Delegates are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Nonlegislative members are appointed by the Governor. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the Chairman of the Veterans Services Foundation, Chairman of the War Memorial Foundation Board, and the Chairman of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations serve *ex officio*.
2. Terms: Legislative members, the DVS Commissioner, the JLC Chairman, and the VSF Chairman serve Board terms coincide with their terms of office. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, are for the unexpired terms. All members may be reappointed. However, no House member can serve more than six consecutive two-year terms, no Senate member can serve more than three consecutive four-year terms. Non-legislative citizen members appointed to serve an unexpired term is eligible to serve two consecutive four-year terms immediately succeeding such unexpired term.
3. Qualifications: Board members are appointed for the expertise they have regarding the various service lines and programs administered by DVS. This should include at least one board member with experience in best practices in each of the following: benefits claim service; budgets and strategic planning; cemetery operations; education; employment, training, and entrepreneurship, medical and health care management; mental and behavioral health, justice involved veterans and the legal system.

### **Article III – Officers**

1. **General:** DVS shall provide staff to assist the Board in their administrative, planning and procedural duties.

The Board will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from its membership. The DVS Commissioner is not eligible to serve as Chair.

2. **Primary Duties of the Chair:** Preside over all meetings and perform the duties required before, during and after to ensure a smooth, well-run meeting. The Chair will serve as an *ex officio* member of the Veterans Services Foundation (with voting privileges), the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (with no voting privileges), and the Virginia War Memorial Board (with voting privileges). The Chair may designate a Board member to represent him/her at these meetings. The Chair shall appoint work groups, as needed, and in such a way as to allow the Board to fulfill its' powers and duties.
3. **Additional Duties of the Chair:** The Chair shall work closely with DVS staff and Board members on pre-meeting planning and preparations. Shall maintain communication with the Commissioner, and other DVS staff, on all budget, policy and strategic planning initiatives put forward by the Board. Shall meet with legislators, as needed, and represent the Board before the Virginia General Assembly. Shall coordinate with the DVS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Policy and Planning on long-term strategic planning and budgetary issues to maintain strong programs and services within DVS for Virginia's veterans. Shall maintain communication with each Board member and assign projects and duties as needed. Upon request of the Commissioner, the Chair shall write letters to communicate policy and budget initiatives affecting DVS and Virginia's veterans to legislators.
4. **Primary Duties of the Vice Chair:** In the absence of the Chair, preside at Board meetings; perform duties as assigned by the Chair; assume the responsibilities of the Chair in the event the Chair can no longer fulfill them; and assume the role of Chair for the remainder of the elected Chair's term, if necessary.
5. **Term of Service:** The Chair and Vice-Chair will serve a two-year term of office. The Chair and Vice-Chair are eligible for re-election, but can serve no more than two consecutive terms. In the event the office of Chair or Vice-Chair is vacated prior to the scheduled completion of that officer's term of office, a Chair or Vice-Chair shall be elected to serve the remainder of the term of office, in which case an election to fill an unexpired term greater than one year shall count as one term toward the two consecutive term limit.
6. **Elections:** Candidates for office may either put their own name forward, or may be nominated by another member. Nominations will be made to the Chair, verbally or in writing, so that the nominees can be conveyed to the full Board at least 14 days prior to the meeting when elections will be held. Elections will be by voice vote during the first regularly scheduled meeting following July 1.

#### **Article IV – Powers and Duties of Board**

1. Advise the DVS Commissioner upon such matters as may arise in the performance of his/her duties.
2. Advise the DVS Commissioner upon such matters as may arise, upon request of the Commissioner of Veterans Services, or the Governor, related to the provision of care and services to veterans.
3. Advise the DVS Commissioner upon such matters as may arise affecting the welfare of Virginia citizens who are veterans or dependents or survivors of such veterans.
4. Review policies related to the coordinated delivery of veterans services and develop recommendations for policies and procedures related to the efficient and effective delivery of services provided by DVS.
5. Review and advise the DVS Commissioner on the Department's strategic plan and annual report.
6. Provide recommendations to DVS regarding the acquisition of facilities that may benefit the Commonwealth's veterans, including, but not limited to, veterans cemeteries and veterans care centers.

#### **Article V – Work Groups**

1. The Board shall organize itself in such a way as to allow it to fulfill its powers and duties, including work groups, created at the discretion of the Chair.
2. Work groups, on behalf of the entire Board, will perform detailed analytical and investigative work on a specific issue. Work groups will be formed only to deal with policy or procedural issues related to the DVS service lines; policy initiatives regarding veterans; researching programs and initiatives currently in place in other states and the possibility of pursuing and implementing similar programs in Virginia; or other projects as requested by the Board Chair and/or DVS Commissioner.
3. Work groups shall form upon the call and discretion of the Chair, and complete their work within 12 consecutive months from the time the Chair nominates and the Board members approve the formation and membership of the work group. Committee members will be selected for their subject matter expertise. The Chair shall name a Committee Chair and at least two additional members. The work group shall work with DVS staff to compile a final report, which they will present to the Chair and Commissioner, and then present to the Board at the first regularly scheduled meeting following the completion of their work.
4. Any Board member may make a request for a work group to the Board Chair.

## **Article VI – Service Line Points of Contact (POCs)**

1. The Chair shall appoint Points of Contact (POC) from the membership of the Board with the specific qualifications and experience to best serve each of the DVS Service Line Directors, providing support in developing effective policy recommendations related to the services provided to Virginia's veterans.
2. Each POC shall provide oversight, counsel and develop recommendations for the Service Line Director and Commissioner on the administration, organization, fiscal operation, expansion and policies for the function of the service line, procedures to ensure compliance with all state and federal requirements, and when applicable, assist in the development of professional competency testing and performance reviews to ensure the highest quality of expertise.
3. When applicable, POCs shall ensure that all relevant policies and hiring and training practices are followed through on by the Director, and Supervisors, if relevant.
4. For Service Line Directors with more than two POCs, all work and meetings shall be in compliance with FOIA and other state regulations regarding Virginia Boards and Commissions.
5. Each POC shall be available to the DVS staff and Commissioner for assistance with the annual review of the operational, financial and organizational policies.
6. The Service Line POCs shall be:
  - Benefits Services
  - Behavioral Health & Housing
  - Cemeteries
  - Communications
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Legal & Criminal Justice
  - Policy & Budget
  - Strategic Planning
  - Veterans Care Centers

## **Article VII – Meetings and Compensation**

1. Meetings: The Board will meet at least three times a year, or on the call of the Chair.
2. Attendance: Board members shall attend all or the majority of meetings in each year. If a member is unable to attend due to an emergency or personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the emergency or personal matter to the Chair within 3 days of the meeting, the member shall be allowed to attend the meeting remotely, following all

procedures and guidelines laid out in the Code of Virginia, Chapter 37 – Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) § 2.2-3708.1 “Participation in meetings in event of emergency or personal matter; certain disabilities; distance from meeting location for certain public bodies.” A copy of the code section is in the member handbook distributed to each member upon appointment to the board. It is the responsibility of each member to read, understand and follow the procedures.

3. Compensation and Reimbursement of Expenses: Board members shall be reimbursed for expenses and compensated for Board service as provided for in the Code of Virginia and the current Appropriations Act.

### **Article VIII –Miscellaneous**

1. Quorum: A majority of the voting members of the Board constitutes a quorum.
2. Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws: These Bylaws can be amended by a two-thirds vote cast from voting Board members, if prior notice of the vote has been given.
3. Parliamentary Authority: The adopted parliamentary authority for Board meetings is the current version of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

## ATTACHMENT 7

August 22, 2019

Mr. Steven J. Combs  
Acting Commissioner  
Virginia Department of Veterans Services  
101 N 14<sup>th</sup> St, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Acting Commissioner Combs,

Virginia's state-operated veterans care centers deliver outstanding skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's/dementia care, and short-term rehabilitative care to Virginia veterans – care they have earned through their service and sacrifice. Ensuring that our care centers are properly staffed and resourced has always been a top priority of the Board of Veterans Services.

The Board has been briefed on the funding necessary to open and operate the ***Puller Veterans Care Center*** (Vint Hill, Fauquier County) and the ***Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center*** (City of Virginia Beach) – that will be completed in 2021.

We recommend that you make this funding a top priority in the Department of Veterans Services' budget request package you will submit through the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs for inclusion in Governor Ralph Northam's introduced biennial budget for FY2021-22.

The Board stands ready to assist in any way needed.

Sincerely,

Chairman

**ATTACHMENT 8**  
**Report of the Education Working Group, Michael Dick, Chair**

August 19, 2019

From: Michael Dick

To: James Icenhour, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services

'cc: Steven Combs, Acting Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services  
Carrie Ann Alford, Department of Veterans Services

Subj: Education Working Group Report

Encl: (1) Questionnaire for School Administrators  
(2) Questionnaire for Student Veterans

1. Presented below is a report for the Board meeting on August 22, 2019.

- The attached questionnaires have been finalized and are being distributed to schools identified in a previous Working Group meeting. The intention is to use the questionnaires to obtain initial information that would help focus the Working Group's further inquiry during on-campus visits.
- I am working with the identified schools to set up the on-campus visits. Projected timeframes for visits to the schools are as follows.

<b>School</b>	<b>Timeframe for on-campus visits</b>
Tidewater Community College	TBD
Old Dominion University	Late September
Hampton University	October
Virginia Commonwealth University	October
Virginia State University	November
George Mason University	mid-September
Virginia Tech	November
Liberty University	TBD

- I will provide additional information as it becomes available.



### Questions for Student Veterans

The below information is solicited by the Education Task Force of the Virginia Board of Veterans Services. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain initial information about the support services provided for student veterans at Virginia's colleges and universities. It is the intention of the Task Force to conduct on-campus meetings to further develop an understanding of how Virginia's colleges and universities support student veterans and provide, if appropriate, recommendations to the Department of Veterans Services for enhancing such support.

1. Name of School:
2. Your student status, e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.:
3. Is there an active student veteran organization on your campus?
  - a. If so, to what extent does the school support the organization?
  - b. Have you found the organization to be helpful/useful? If so, please identify the way(s) it has been helpful.
4. Does your school provide a dedicated room, building or office space for student veterans' activities?
5. Have you ever met the senior campus official responsible for supporting student veterans?
6. How would you rate the attitude of your school's **administrators, faculty, and staff** towards student veterans? \_\_Excellent \_\_Good \_\_Neutral \_\_Poor \_\_Unacceptable
7. How would you rate the attitude of your school's **student body** towards student veterans? \_\_Excellent \_\_Good \_\_Neutral \_\_Poor \_\_Unacceptable
8. In your opinion, what is the single most important issue or concern facing student veterans at your school?
9. What is the most important action or support activity you would like to see undertaken by your school to better support student veterans?
10. Does your school have relationships with off-campus entities that provide support to veterans? If so, please identify the type of external support, e.g., medical or legal services.
11. Please identify any recommendations you would make to the Virginia Board of Veterans Services or Department of Veterans Services for enhancing support to the student veteran population at your school.

### **Questions for School Administrators**

The below information is solicited by the Education Task Force of the Virginia Board of Veterans Services. The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain initial information about the support services provided for student veterans. It is the intention of the Task Force to conduct on-campus meetings to further develop an understanding of how Virginia's colleges and universities support student veterans and provide, if appropriate, recommendations to the Department of Veterans Services for enhancing such support.

1. Name of School:
2. Name and title of person responsible for supporting student veterans:
3. Who does this person report to?
4. Percentage of student body identified as student veterans:
5. Percentage of student body identified as military-affiliated students (veterans plus immediate family members of veterans):
6. Is there a school sanctioned student veterans organization at your school? If so, what support does the school provide to this organization?
7. Does your school provide a dedicated room, building or office space for student veterans' activities?
8. What is the major issue or concern facing student veterans at your school?
9. In terms of your school's efforts to support student veterans, what do you consider the major challenge or concern confronting the ***school***?
10. Does your school have relationships with off-campus entities that provide support to veterans? If so, please identify the type of external support, e.g., medical or legal services.
11. Please identify any recommendations you would make to the Virginia Board of Veterans Services or Department of Veterans Services for enhancing support to the student veteran population at your school.

## ATTACHMENT 9

Board of Veterans Services

Benefits Working Group – Report to the Board, August 22, 2019

**Team:**

- Carl Bedell, Chair
- Susan Hippen
- Jim Icenhour
- John Lesinski
- Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Support Staff

**Background:** The Virginia Division of Veterans Services (DVS) advocates for Virginia veterans and connects them to benefits and services they have earned. The DVS operates 31 Benefits Service Offices across the Commonwealth that provides veterans information and assistance on current federal, state and local veterans' programs, and entitlements.

Since 2015, DVS has improved its Benefits operations by opening eight new Benefits Service Offices, a Center of Excellence, and focusing on employee training and quality. Despite this growth, and the budget increase that has funded it, DVS recognizes that obstacles exist that will hinder sustained growth of DVS Benefits offerings.

**Course of Work:** The Working Group will study the strategy for continued growth and the obstacles that may hinder that growth. We will develop recommendations to support or strengthen the growth strategy and address any identified obstacles. We will study the current economic impact of received benefits by Virginia veterans and develop justifications for increased funding for DVS Benefits. Specifically, the Working Group will:

- Interview Benefits staff to understand issues affecting employee retention and issues affecting or limiting service offerings;
- Analyze budget/funding issues and shortfalls and develop justifications for budget or funding increases.

**Current Status:** The Working Group has conducted several interviews with the former Director of Benefits Tom Herthel and the new Director of Benefits Donna Williams. Through these conversations, the issue of DVS staff salaries has risen as a top level risk to the continued success of DVS service offerings. The DVS leadership has provided information that indicates DVS staff are significantly underpaid relative to their peers working in for the Commonwealth and for VSOs, non-profit organizations, and veteran law firms. This disparity appears to be especially true for attorneys and staff located in Northern Virginia. The working group has begun to collect salary data for DVS staff positions and comparative data for similar duty position and geographic locations for other state employees to validate these claims.

**Next Steps:** The working group has submitted FOIA requests for State employee data and will analyze the data to determine the severity of any salary disparity. The Working Group intends to have completed the analysis of the employment data and develop a draft of a white paper with our findings at the following Board meeting.

## **ATTACHMENT 10**

### **Veterans in the Arts Working Group – Report to the Board, 22 August 2019**

#### **Team:**

Ms. Julie Waters, Chair  
Mr. Carl Bedell  
Mr. Victor Angry  
Mr. Frank Reyes  
Ms. Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Support Staff

#### **Background:**

This working group was convened to study the issues surrounding Veterans and the Arts. Through the assistance of Ms. Alford, the group focused research and attention on arts as an economic and small business endeavor in Virginia and how policy recommendations can support and strengthen current or potential efforts.

#### **Subject: Report on Recommendation to DGS**

On Monday, August 12, Julie Waters, Chair, and Carrie Ann Alford, DVS Policy Director met with DGS Director Joe Damico and his team. It went very well! They had several ideas above and beyond what the BVS recommended.

Director Damico discussed moving forward with a decision paper to Clark Mercer, Chief of Staff to Governor Northam, regarding the BVS recommendation about having a temporary art instillation on state property. He said he would request artwork for the Capitol Square grounds for the month of November. Also, if it goes well and we can find a woman veteran artist, they will make another request for March (women veterans week is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March).

They also invited DVS to sponsor a table at On The Square events – these are social events set up by DGS and the Governor’s staff for state employees, but other Richmonders who work nearby often come and join in. Director Damico and Policy Analyst Jennifer Boyd mentioned either Food Truck Wednesdays or a Farmer’s Market Fridays (or one of each) in September and October. The idea is to have veteran artists display and sell their artwork. DVS would need to be the sponsor, but the BVS and work group members in particular should to help Carrie Ann with the table. That would include recommending artists, setting up and taking down the tent and table, manning the table to talk to state employees about the work of the board and work group and any other duties as needed.

Finally, DGS discussed putting out an RFP for agencies to buy new artwork for their buildings and buy from Virginia veteran owned businesses – either the artist him/herself or a veteran gallery owner selling artwork by veterans. While we do have Carl Bedell on this work group who has extensive art contacts, we need anyone with contacts and suggestions to provide them to Ms. Waters and DVS as soon as possible. Ms. Waters and Ms. Alford are working with the staff of the Virginia War Memorial as they have done art events and instillations in the past. Given how fast they want this up and running, we need to act quickly as to not lose enthusiasm.

**Questions for the Board:**

- Are members willing to help out with the On The Square events? If so -
- Do you know of artists who would be interested in participating?
- Do you know of art programs at universities or colleges in Virginia that should be contacted?
- Are there any galleries in Virginia that show and promote artists who are veterans?
- Are any members willing to work with DGS on the art instillation in November? Should we find one artist or put out an RFP and have BVS members select a “winner”?
- Are any members willing to work with DGS on the art instillation in March and finding women veterans who are artists?

This could bring good press for DVS and veterans who are artists as well as really promote the arts as small business in Virginia.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Waters, Chair

**ATTACHMENT 11**

**Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

**Article III – Officers**

6. Elections: Candidates for office may either put their own name forward, or may be nominated by another member. Nominations will be made to the Chair, verbally or in writing, so that the nominees can be conveyed to the full Board at least 14 days prior to the meeting when elections will be held. Elections will be by voice vote during the first regularly scheduled meeting following July 1.

Therefore, the candidate for Chairman of the Board of Veterans  
Services is:

**Michael Dick**

The candidates for Vice Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services  
are:

**Carl Bess**

Or

**Tammi Lambert**